

March 2020

III Marine Expeditionary Force

Message to the Force

Marines, fellow III MEF teammates, and family members,

I want to thank all of you for your patience and leadership as we wrestle with the impacts and potential effects of the virus, Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). To date, our response and actions to this threat have been both measured and deliberate. We have protected the force, complied with higher headquarters guidance, and continued the mission to the best of our ability. I recognize there is a tidal wave of information (and guidance) flowing from governments and through every type of media conduit and forum. This, and our own anxiety, creates turmoil in our work and daily lives. As with any threat, we will continue to adapt and overcome.

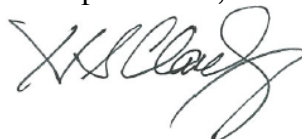
You should know by now the World Health Organization has assessed that COVID-19 is a pandemic, and the President of the United States has declared this a national emergency. You should also be aware that Japan is currently a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Travel Health Notice (THN) Level 2 country, and we are in Health Protection Condition (HPCON) B. There are similar elevated THNs and HPCONs for every location where we serve in the Indo-Pacific. These together mean we are at a heightened risk to our mission and welfare. In response to this heightened risk, the Secretary of Defense has responded with memorandums to guide actions throughout the Armed Forces. The situation may seem stable where you are, but we are still anticipating and preparing for additional outbreaks throughout our area of operations and across the globe.

As the situation evolves, I expect leaders to enforce policies, guidance, and orders. I also expect each of us to comply with the clear intent of all of these documents to limit movement, limit unnecessary contact, and limit large gatherings. Use good judgment, make sound decisions in your interactions, and work to ensure we continue the mission while looking out for the welfare of each other.

To address the developing situation, III MEF and other senior commands have established COVID-19 response cells. Preventing the spread of misinformation is a key part of this fight. I am counting on commanders to ensure every member of the team and their families have the most up-to-date information and have avenues through which to ask questions and clarify guidance. Along with our orders, the MEF has created a COVID-19 page on the III MEF website. This is a good resource for you to reference and a place for you to direct others. Further, we have an organizational email for questions about COVID-19: mefcovid.questions@usmc.mil. I am prepared to provide additional mechanisms for information sharing as needed, and I welcome your ideas.

As always, I am proud to stand with you Forward, Faithful, and Focused.

Semper Fidelis,



H. S. CLARDY, III
Lieutenant General, U.S. Marines Corps
Commanding General